

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 2, 6 to 8, 10, 12 and 16 to 18 without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter, and amend Claims 1, 3 to 5, 9, 11, 13 to 15, 19 and 20 as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, now read as follows:

1. (Currently amended) An image processing method in an image processing apparatus ~~that is capable of reading an image, processing the image in accordance with settings information~~, comprising:

a reading step of reading a document image;

an identification step of identifying, based upon document format, whether or not the read document image is an image carrying contains settings information;

a processing step, if the read document image has not been identified as a document image containing settings information, that transmits the document image to a printing unit and print-processes the document image in accordance with settings previously stored in a data table; and

a setting step, if the read document image has been identified as being a document image containing settings information, of setting that writes the settings information into the data table, which is carried on the read image so that a document image later read is print-processed in accordance with the settings,

wherein the settings information which is carried on the read document image may include a subset of the settings included in the data table, and

wherein, if a read document image includes a subset of the settings in the data table and references a previously read document image containing settings

information, settings from the referenced document image are first written into the data table, then any settings contained on the later read document image are written into the data table, replacing corresponding settings from the referenced document image, and

wherein, if a read document image includes a subset of the settings in the data table and no previously read document image containing settings information is referenced by the later read document, default settings are written into the data table, then any settings contained on the later read document are written into the data table, replacing the corresponding default settings if the read image has been identified as being an image carrying the settings information.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said identification step identifies whether the read document image is a document carrying settings information based upon information that has been added onto the read image at a prescribed position thereof.

4. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said identification step identifies whether the read document image is a document carrying settings information based upon electronic watermark information that has been added onto the read document image.

5. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said identification step identifies whether the read document image is a document carrying settings information based upon information of a two-dimensional bar code that has been added onto the read document image.

6. to 8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 [[8]], further comprising a display step of displaying the settings information, wherein, if the settings information carried on the read document image has [[an]] a deficiency, said display step displays the settings item to which the deficiency pertains.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 [[10]], further comprising a voice output step of outputting the settings information, wherein, if the settings information carried on the read document image has a deficiency, said voice output step outputs as voice a settings item to which the deficiency pertains.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 [[12]], further comprising a correction step of correcting the settings information, wherein said correction step corrects the settings information based upon a recognized voice input.

14. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising an image synthesis step of combining the read document image,[[;]] said image synthesis step performing image synthesis using [[an]] a previously read document image for combination, when the previously read document image is referenced in the settings information of the newly read document image.

15. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising a printout step of printing out settings information, which has been used to print-process ~~process~~ the read document image, after the read document image has been print-processed ~~processed~~.

16. to 18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently amended) An image processing apparatus ~~that is capable of~~ reading an image and processing the image in accordance with settings information, comprising:

reading means for reading a document image;

identification means for identifying, based upon document format, whether or not the read document image is a document carrying contains settings information;

processing means, if the read document image has not been identified as a document image containing settings information, for transmitting the document image to a printing unit and print-processing the document image in accordance with settings previously stored in a data table; and

setting means, if the read document image has been identified as being a document image carrying settings information, for setting writing the settings information into the data table, which is carried on the read image so that a document image, read after the document image containing settings information, is print-processed in accordance with the settings information if the read image has been identified as being a document carrying the settings information;

wherein the settings information which is carried on the read document image may include a subset of the settings in the data table, and

wherein, if a read document image includes a subset of the settings in the data table and references a previously read document image containing settings information, settings from the referenced document image are first written into the data table, then any settings contained on the later read document image are written into the data table, replacing corresponding settings from the referenced document image, and

wherein, if a read document image includes a subset of the settings in the data table and no previously read document image containing settings information is referenced by the later read document, default settings are written into the data table, then any settings contained on the later read document are written into the data table, replacing the corresponding default settings if the read image has been identified as being a document carrying the settings information.

20. (Currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium storing a computer-executable control program for causing a computer to implement the image processing method set forth in claim 1.